

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1703

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WB, GW, GE

SUBJECT: GDR STOPPAGE OF CDU STERNFAHFT BUSES

SUMMARY: AS SEEN FROM US MISSION VANTAGE POINT, UNEXPECTED GDR DECISION TO NTERVENE FOR POLITICAL REASONS AGAINST WEST GERMAN TRAFFIC TO BERLIN WILL CAUSE CONSIDERABLE STRAIN IN INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. IT WAS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT SOVIETS AND EAST GERMANS HAVE SOME SORT OF CO-DETERMING ROLE IN DECIDING PERMISSIBILITY OF EVENTS IN WEST BERLIN. HOWEVER, STIMULUS AND EXCUSE FOR MOVE WAS UNCOORDINATED CDU ACTION WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED BY FRG GOVERNMENT EVEN HAD IT WISHED TO DO SO. END SUMMARY.

1. THE GDR STOPPAGE ON AUGUST 13 OF THE NUMEROUS BUSES
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AND PRIVATE CARS OF THE ILL-CONCEIVED CDU STERNFAHRT (A RALLY IN WHICH PARTICIPANTS CONVERGE ON THE CENTER FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS) LEAVES MORE DEBRIS AROUND THAN THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF SOME CDU YOUNG UNION TRAVELLERS. THE COLLISION WILL HAVE CAUSED DENTS WHICH CANNOT YET BE FULLY SURVEYED IN FRG OSTPOLITIK, INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS, ACCESS TO BERLIN, AND IN THE QA ITSELF. THE GDR ACTION IS QUALITATIVELY AKIN TO THE TURNBACK IN JULY 1974 OF A SINGLE FRG OFFICIAL FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, IN THAT THE GDR UTILIZED THE LEVERAGE OF PERMITTING OR DENYING PASSAGE IN ORDER TO ENFORCE A GDR(AND SOVIET) POLITICAL INTERPRETATION AND STRUCTURE UPON BERLIN. QUANTITATIVELY, THE LATEST INTERVENTION WAS MUCH MORE DRASTIC, AS HUNDREDS OF TRAVELLERS WERE BARRED.

2. IT IS OUR GUESS THAT THE INCIDENT WHICH TRIGGERED THESE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS RESULTED FROM ONLY PARTIALY FORTUITOUS COVERAGE OF HARDLINERS IN BOTH THE FRG AND THE GDR. THE RECENT BORDER SHOOTING CONTROVERSY SOURED DISPOSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES AND PREPARED THE WAY. WE DOUBT THAT THE RECENT GDR WARNINGS ON AUGUST 8 AND AUGUST 12 WERE MERELY DEFENSIVE, E.G., TO FORESTALL FRG EFFORTS TO TAKE THEM INTO A UN DOCK. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME EAST GERMANS WHO WANTED TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE, TO LIMIT OR PRECLUDE BETTERMENT OF INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS AND TO ADVANCE THE PRINCIPLE OF GDR-SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN THE DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES OF THE WESTERN SECTORS OF BERLIN.

3. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CDU OPINION WHICH DOES NOT SHY AWAY FROM COLLABORATION WITH SUCH GDR WRECKERS. ON ONE END OF THE CDU/CSU SPECTRUM ARE FANATICS LIKE THOSE WHO RECOMMEND THAT THE WEST GERMAN BORDERPOLICE FIRE BACK AT THE GDR GUARDS, A CONDUCT WHICH LONG AGO WAS DISCREDITED AS UNACCEPTABLY DANGEROUS AND WHICH WAS NEVER CARRIED OUT UNDER ADENAUER. AT THE OTHER END ARE OPPORTUNISTS WHO HAVE DECIDED TO DENOUNCE THE COALITION AS TOO " SOFT" ON THE EAST AND TO TRY FOR POLITICAL PROFIT BY CARRYING OUT ACTIONS AFFECTING BERLIN WHOSE ANNOUNCED AIMS ARE INTENDED TO BE PERCEIVED BY THE GDR AS PROVOCATIVE.

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THEY SEEM OBLIVIOUS TO THE DANGER THAT THE BERL AGREEMENTS, WHICH ARE FRAGILE AND STILL IN PROCESS OF EVOLUTION, CAN THEREBY BE DAMAGED, AND EXISTING GAINS CUT BACK. THE GAME IS THUS RISKY, WHATEVER THE MERITS OF OUR LEGAL POSITION, WHICH IS CLEAR ENOUGH, I.E., THAT THE GDR HAS CLEARLY VIOLATED THE TRANSIT AGREEMENT.

4. THERE WERE INDEED WARNINGS ABOUT THE RISKS OF HE STERNFAHRT FROM THE SPD AND EVEN THE CONSERVATIVE FAZ. BUT ONCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE, A GAME OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL "CHICKEN" WAS INEVITABLE AND IT HAD TO BE PLAYED OUT UNTIL THERE WAS RUDE COLLISION AT HELMSTEDT.

5. THE GDR ACTION HAS SOME INTERESTING CHARACTERISTICS:

A. IT REFLECTS CONSIDERABLE RISK-TAKING, OR BETTER SAID, A THOUGHT-OUT ACCEPTANCE OF CONSEQUENCES. THE GDR SEEMS THOROUGHLY WILLING WITH THIS DECISION TO BURDEN THE CARPENTRY OF THE ENTIRE INNER-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP. THE DECISION SIMILARLY SEEMS TO REPRESENT A SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO RISK GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE FRG, OR EVEN WORSE, A RETURN TO THE BANKRUPT SOVIET CONCEPT THAT THEY CAN ENFORCE GOOD RELATIONS BY PRESSURE ON BERLIN.

B. IN REGARD TO THE LATTE CONCEPT, THE MOVE MAY BE A FIRST INJECTION OF CONTENT INTO THE THE AMBIGUOUS SOVIET FORMULA OF LAST SPRING THAT THE STAKES OF BERLIN WILL DEPEND UPON FRG GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE BLOC.

C. THE SOVIETS ALSO HAVE NOT SHIED AWAY FROM CONFRONTING THE ALLIES.

D. AS WITH THE JULY 1974 STOPPAGE, THIS MOVE HAS A PRECISE AIM. IN JULY 1974 THE GOAL WAS TO ENFORCE COMMUNIST DEMANDS THAT THERE BE NO FURTHER BUILD-UP OF FEDERAL OFFICES IN BERLIN. IN AUGUST 1976 THE AIM WAS TO ENFORCE A PRETEXT OF SOVIET AND GDR CODETERMINATION IN WEST BERLIN. THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR. IF POLITICAL EVENTS OCCUR IN THE WESTERN SECTORS WHICH ARE OFFENSIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS, THEY WILL USE THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL LEVERAGE TO INFLICT "CONSEQUENCE" ON THE WEST. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING TO FORCE THE ALLIES TO COME TO THEM AS MEDANDERS FOR CONSULTATION UNDER THE QA. EVEN IF THE SOVIETS DO NOT REGARD THIS AS LIKELY, IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE MOST AGREEABLE OUTCOME FOR THEM.

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6. THE MOVE ARISES IMMEDIATELY OUT OF CURIOUS ADMIXTURE OF GDR SIGNALS TO GAUS AND HIS OFFICE (BERLIN 6472). IT CERTAINLY CALLS INTO QUESTION THE "PRELIMINARY" FRG ESTIMATES OF MIDDLE OF LAST WEEK THAT THE GDR WAS INTERESTED IN REDUCTION OF TENSION. THE GDR HAS ALSO DEMONSTRATED SOME INDIFFERENCE TO THE FRG ELECTION, THE IMPACT ON IT BEING DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE. OBVIOUSLY THE CDU RECEIVED A REBUFF. BUT THE EVENT LENDS ELEMENT OF SUPPORT TO CDU THESIS THAT QA AND COLLOCATION OF POLITICS IS INCOMPLETE AND INADEQUATE, AND IT GIVES NO COMFORT TO SPD THEORIES THAT GER CAN BE GRADUALLY CIVILIZED TOWARDS MORE DECENT STANDARDS OF CONDUCT.

7. THE ALLIES ARE OF COURSE DIRECTLY INVOLVED, ALTHOUGH AS YET ONLY AT SECOND REMOVE. THE VERY PROMPT ALLIED REACTION WITH OUR STATEMTN OF AUGUST 14 WAS EXTREMELY WELL RECEIVED, JUDING FROM THE GERMAN PRESS. THE NEXT FORMAL RECOURSE WILL BE TO A MEETING OF THE FRG-GDR TRANSIT COMMISSION ON AUGUST 17 OR 18. THIS WILL DOUBTLESS BE NO MORE SATISFACTORY THAN WAS THE MEETING AFTER THE 1974 POLITICAL STOPPAGE, I.E., THERE WLL BE NO BROKERAGE OF VIEWPOINTS BUT ONLY A STANDOFF OF OPPOSED FACTS AND INTERPRETATIONS. WHATEVER THE ALLIED FURTHER REACTION (AND IT SHOULD BE VIGOUROU AND STRAIGHTFORWARD), THE OTHERSIDE HAS IN FACT POSTED A RESTRICTIVE DEFINITION WHICH CANBE TROUBLESOME TO THE FRG AND BERLIN IN THE FUTURE, AND CAN BE A DISINCENTIVE TO SETTLEMENT, IMMIGRATION, AND DISPOSITION FOR INVESTMENT IN THE CITY.

8. THE DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATES THE LIMITS OF FRG GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL OVER BERLIN DEVELOPMENTS, AND THUS OVER AN IMPORTANT SECTOR OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY. ACTIVITIES AFFECTING BERLIN, AND EVEN AGAINST THE GDR WALL ON ITS " BORDER", ARE, ACCORIDNG TO INTERPREATIONAS FIRMLY ANCHORED I WEST GERMAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW, " INTERNAL", AFFAIRS, IN WHICH GERMAN CITIZENS ARE GRANTD A FULL PLAY OF PERSONAL AND POLTICIAL ENTERPRISE. AS HAS JUST BEEN SEN, THE GDR SOVIETS CAN PLAY A REAL SPOLLING ROLE AGAINST SUCH INTERPREATIONS.

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9. ON ONE SIDE THE CHANCELLOR IS CONFRONTED BY CDU LEADERS WHO IN SPITE OF SOME POINTED WARNINGS HAVE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND EITHER THE RISKS OF PLAYING DOMESTIC POLITICS WITH THE BERLIN ISSUE, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ALLIED ROLE. ON THE OTHER SIDE IS FONMIN GENSCHER WHO HIMSELF IS GIVEN TO POLITICALY INSPIRED EXCURSIONS, AND WHO WAS A MJOR PERSONAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE CRISIS OF JULY 1974. KEEPING THE BALANCE IN OSTPOLITIK WILL CALL FOR VISION AND STEADINESS OVER THE REMAINDER OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.
GEORGE

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